

Program Performance Report

Activities for the Past 12 Months Prior to Application Submission

Child Advocacy Centers

During FFY08, CJA grant money was provided to the Child Advocacy Centers in Missouri, necessary to improve the processes by which Missouri could respond to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly, child sexual abuse, or exploitation. Forensic examinations, victim interviews, referrals to treatment providers, gathering and retention of forensic evidence used for criminal prosecution of the offender, were made possible through funding provided by the CJA grant.

There are 15 Child Advocacy Centers located across the State, with some locations having satellite offices, serving children and families in the surrounding counties. This process allows for a one-time interview of the victim, with the opportunity for the physical examination to occur in the same location, preventing unnecessary stress and trauma to the child victim and their family. Child Advocacy Centers often facilitate scheduling the exams and interviews to further assist in the investigation and criminal prosecution process.

SAFE-CARE network providers (physicians and other medical providers who conduct forensic examinations) work in close collaboration with the Child Advocacy Centers. The mission statement of the SAFE-CARE Network continues to be “to improve outcomes for children who are victims of, or at risk for, child maltreatment by enhancing the skills and role of the medical provider in a multidisciplinary context”.

While data related to the successful prosecution of perpetrators involved in cases that are served by the Child Advocacy Centers is not available, it is well established that the forensic process provided by the Advocacy Centers, including the handling of evidence and quality of victim interviews, continues to improve the investigation and judicial handling (prosecution) process.

The majority of forensic interviewers who conduct the victim interviews use a model interviewing technique called “Finding Words”. By using this technique, the quality of the victim interview is raised to a standard that prosecutors consider helpful in the prompt and successful resolution of civil, and particularly, the criminal court proceedings.

CJA Support for the Child Advocacy Centers facilitated compliance with RSMo 210.001.1, which designates Child Advocacy Centers in Missouri.

Review of Child Fatality of Child that was in State Custody

On 2/24/2009, the Task Force submitted a report providing recommendations in response to a fatality review completed by the Office of Child Advocate. The Task Force had requested that the Office of Child Advocate review the fatality as there were concerns surrounding the handling of the case leading up to the fatality. The case involved a sibling group of two, Child A and Child B, where one of the children committed suicide.

The full copy of the Task Force report, as well as the Children's Division response to the recommendations made, is attached.

Program Performance Report

Funded Projects in FFY08

Child Advocacy Centers

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Total \$ 315,401. 89

Description of activities to be assisted with Children's Justice Act grant funds during FFY09

1. Task Force on Children's Justice Operating Expenses and Projects

Funding in the amount of \$10,000.00 is needed to support and maintain the activities, correspondence, teleconferences, quarterly meetings of the Task Force, and attendance for two persons to attend a CJA conference, in addition to funding grant project requests that may arise as appropriate.

Total \$ 10,000
(* Plus additional activities will be supported with carryover from prior year grants. Total projected expenditure for this activity will be \$60,000).

2. Child Assessment Centers

Child Assessment Centers in Missouri are utilized for the investigation and prosecution of child abuse, in particular, child sexual abuse. The Children's Division currently funds Child Assessment Centers, of which a portion of the funding for the Child Assessment Centers comes from the CJA Grant.

The entire child population in Missouri has access to one of these centers, as they serve state-wide. The number of children served would be proportional to the number of children reported for child abuse and neglect, especially, sexual abuse. The children served are those children who have been reported as a victim of child abuse, but primarily, child sexual abuse. Child Assessment Centers are one-stop shops, where child victims can be interviewed one time, while allowing observation by witnesses such as the Guardian Ad Litem, Prosecuting Attorney, Law Enforcement and Children's Division Investigators, and recording of the interview for criminal prosecution. The Assessment Centers refer victims and their non-offending caregivers to additional supportive service providers when needed, who can continue to address trauma issues for the child or family. The Centers contribute to the reform of State systems handling of cases of child abuse and neglect by not only increasing the chance of effective prosecution by including multi-disciplinary team members and expert forensic interviewers in the investigation process, but it also further reduces trauma to the victim by reducing the number of interviews.

Total \$300,000
(* Plus additional activities will be supported with carryover from prior year grants. Total projected expenditure for this activity will be \$320,000).

Missouri Juvenile Justice Association Fall Conference Scholarships

MO Juvenile Justice Association (MJJA) Fall Education Conference October 22-24, 2008. Financial Assistance was provided to cover the cost of registration for 12 attendees from varying professional disciplines involved in the investigation of child abuse/neglect. Scholarship recipients attended workshops related to child welfare. Goals of the conference were to improve the investigative, mental health and medical response, expertise, and understanding of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation for multidisciplinary team members and professionals working with these targeted populations.

Total \$8,775.00

The Child Center 5th Annual Prevention & Interventions Conference

The Child Center 5th Annual Prevention & Interventions Conference April 29-May 1, 2009. Goals of the conference were to improve the investigative, mental health and medical response, expertise, and understanding of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation for multidisciplinary team members and professionals working with these targeted populations.

Total \$ 10,000.00

Missouri Juvenile Justice Association Fall Conference Scholarships

MO Juvenile Justice Association (MJJA) Spring Education Conference May 20-22, 2009. MJJA provided the "*Bridges Out of Poverty*" training program for child welfare professionals during this educational conference. This program will improve the professional's ability to provide improved services in child abuse and neglect services.

Total \$ 5,754.00

Missouri KidsFirst

Missouri KidsFirst received funding to cover the cost of partial scholarships for 40 participants to attend a week long Child First Finding Words Training in Missouri. Missouri KidsFirst is contracted with the National Child Protection and Training Center to provide the training for multidisciplinary teams across Missouri. Teams will include a combination of law enforcement, Children's Division investigators,

prosecutors and juvenile court professionals. Goals of the conference are to improve the investigative, mental health and medical response, expertise, and understanding of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation for multidisciplinary team members and professionals working with these targeted populations.

Total **\$ 10,000.00**

CJA Task Force Recommendations 2-24-2009

OCA Recommendation 1: It is recommended that knowledge of case history be an imperative in order for a case to be assigned to a new worker.

CJA Response/Recommendations:

- Flag cases that contain certain criteria that may make a case more difficult or have complexity due to the following factors:
 - Length of Time in Care
 - Level of Care required (Behavioral, Career, Medical, Residential)
 - Mental Health Diagnosis
 - Frequency of moves
- Cases that are "flagged" should only be assigned to qualified or seasoned workers, Children's Service Worker II. If assigned to a less qualified worker or Children's Service Worker I, additional supervisory time should be required to assure that the worker becomes knowledgeable about the case and the specific needs of the family.
- The Task Force would like to recommend that Judge Cook contact Mary Sheffield to discuss the possibility of removing the "two year" time limit for Judges hearing cases.
 - Sometimes the only consistent member of the team is the Judge. If judges are turning over every two years due to a mandatory time limit, this can cause set backs in a case moving toward permanency.
 - New Judges do not have the same institutional knowledge that seasoned Judges have. Judges need to have a training period to become more knowledgeable. A decrease in the turnover of Judges would assist with Judges who have more knowledge hearing juvenile/family court cases.

OCA Recommendation 2: It is recommended that efforts continue to be made to limit the number of unnecessary moves for foster children.

CJA Response/Recommendations:

- The Task Force recommends reviewing the policy where this is addressed (reviewed by Task Force members present and appropriate to address this recommendation).
- The Task Force discussed the need to ensure that Family Support Team meetings are being held when a placement change for a foster child is necessary. The Task Force discussed the need to ensure that Children's Division is monitoring this through Quality Assurance measures. (This was discussed by the Task Force, however was not a formal recommendation).

OCA Recommendation 3: It is recommended that residential care for Child A be an option only if his/her present foster care environment proves untenable. Hopefully, Child A's next move will be to a permanent family. Nineteen prior placements are far too many.

CJA Response/Recommendations:

- The Task Force feels that it is important to ensure that children in alternative care, who experience a traumatic event receive appropriate wrap around services following the trauma to assist the child in processing the event appropriately and to assist in permanency for the child.

OCA Recommendation 4: The OCA has learned that the case worker for Child A & Child B would occasionally take the children away from the home, take them out to eat, etc. The OCA believes this practice was well-intended and that it allowed for sibling interaction. It is recommended, however that this practice with Child A be discontinued.

CJA Response/Recommendations:

- The Task Force understands the desire of the workers to build rapport with the children and youth on their caseloads, however this case is a good example of the need to ensure that workers have additional training on appropriate boundaries with children and youth on their caseloads.
 - The Task Force feels that Children's Division needs to assure that new workers are provided with appropriate supervision and that supervisors are training their workers appropriately on "safety" standards. Example: Male caseworkers should not transport female youth without another party being present.
 - The Task Force feels that Upper Managements (supervisors, field support managers and Circuit Managers) are responsible to assure that workers are following recommendations set forth by the Family Support Team.
 - The Task Force feels that it is important for there to be appropriate ramifications for staff members who fail to follow policy and safety standards. They would recommend an external review panel that could be comprised to supervise or evaluate "problem" areas. Have a wide range of individuals on the review team who could assist in development of a corrective action plan. Have Social Services Department set up an independent review committee to work for the director in assisting to provide external reviews.
- The Task Force feels that in this case the Family Support Team was not effective. They would recommend in situations where the child has been in care for a lengthy period of time without progress toward permanency that a Trained Mediator be brought in to assist in Team Meetings to bring focus back to the permanency needs of the child.
 - The Task Force would recommend that they be given the opportunity to review the practices of St. Louis City's pilot program, as the program currently encourages a practice of reviewing cases of children who have been in care for two years or longer in an effort to determine case specific

needs and eliminate barriers toward permanency. The Task Force feels that they would like to determine if this would be an appropriate measure to implement in policy.

- The Task Force would like to recommend that the Quality Improvement and Quality Assurance specialists be invited to attend a Task Force meeting to brief Task Force members on current measures they are implementing across the state to improve practice.
- The Task Force would recommend that the Jackson County review team increase their level of supervision. The Task Force feels that the Jackson County review team should be provided with a copy of the report completed by the Office of the Child Advocate as the review they received was “white washed”.

OCA Recommendation 5: It is recommended that crisis counseling be made available to all foster home inhabitants within 24 hours of the death of someone residing in the home.

CJA Response/Recommendations:

- The Task Force was made aware that Child A did have access to Crisis Counseling as he/she had access to his/her counselor. The Task Force however feels that it is imperative for the foster family and other inhabitants of the foster home to receive crisis counseling following the event of a death of a household member.
 - The Task Force would like to recommend that the Children’s Division follow up with local offices to ensure that contact has been made with local Department of Mental Health representatives to create a plan of action to ensure that all household members and staff are allowed access to crisis counselors should a similar event occur in the future.

OCA Recommendation 6: It is recommended that In-Service Training for Reactive Attachment Disorder be available for all foster parents, as determined necessary by the Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Advisory Board and per the Foster Parents Bill of Rights, Chapter 210.566 (1) RSMo.

CJA Response/Recommendations:

- The State Foster Board has submitted a request to Children’s Division for RAD training.
 - The Task Force feels that it would be important for this training to be available for foster parents as well as Children’s Division staff.
 - MO HealthNet is also looking at other pertinent diagnoses where additional training for foster parents would be beneficial. The Task Force would recommend that the Children’s Division provide training on Mental Health Diagnoses that are common for children and youth in care so that foster parents and Children’s Division staff can be trained on best practices in working with children and youth with mental health needs.

OCA Recommendation 7: It is recommended that steps be taken to ensure that foster parents at all levels are fully informed and involved regarding the diagnosis and medication of children under their care.

CJA Response/Recommendations:

- The Task Force recommends that Children's Division ensure that all Foster Parents and placement providers are given any and all mental health information as well as medication information as mandated by law.
 - The Task Force would also recommend that Children's Division Staff be reminded that they are obligated to share any and all diagnosed mental health, physical health, and behavioral condition that the child may have prior to placement and continue to provide updates to placement providers as additional information is gathered.
- The Task Force would additionally recommend that Children's Division ensure that all foster providers and other placement providers are given a copy of the Foster Parents Bill of Rights.
- The Task Force recommends that a subcommittee review the "Initial Placement Form" utilized by Children's Division workers to determine the appropriateness of the form.
- The Task Force would recommend that Foster Parents be encouraged to participate in therapeutic sessions as a participant, not only as a consultant, especially in situations where a child has been diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder as building stability and attachments should be focused on in a therapeutic setting.

OCA Recommendation 8: It is recommended that Family Support Teams be encouraged and charged with the responsibility to explore and consider creative plans designed to address the unique circumstances of each child.

CJA Response/Recommendations:

- The Task Force expects that the Family Support Team function in a manner to assure that the child's needs including permanency are considered.
 - If the Family Support Team is at an impasse, or unable to come to a consensus regarding a decision in some areas this would be taken to management or to a Judge for final recommendation.
 - The Task Force would recommend the utilization of an outside Mediator be brought in to assist in moving the team toward a decision that will be in the best interest of the child. (This was done in the Jackson County case, was not effective).
 - The Task Force would recommend in depth reviews be completed for children and youth in care who meet "red flag" criteria:
 - Time in care exceeds two years
 - Multiple placement disruptions and changes in a short amount of time (3 or more moves in a six month time period)

MISSION and VISION STATEMENTS

Task Force on Children's Justice - Mission Statement

(From Bylaws – June 2005)

The purpose of the Task Force is to advocate for improvements in the Child Welfare System in Missouri...by making recommendations on (1) DSS policy and practices; (2) family and juvenile court practices; and (3) collaborative efforts with community child welfare and other nonpublic entities.

The Task Force also is to:

1. Examine administrative, investigative, & criminal/civil processing of cases involving child abuse & neglect;
2. Review, provide input, & evaluate the priorities/progress of the DSS Children's Division;
3. Make policy, legislative, & training recommendations;
4. Monitor progress on recommendations included in the Supreme Court Commission Final Report (June 2003) & subsequent reports;
5. Assist in developing public awareness strategies for the Children's Division; and
6. Serve as a Citizen Review Panel.

Task Force on Children's Justice - Vision Statement

(June 2005)

1. Children are safe in their homes and communities.
2. Missouri's Child Protection System provides a comprehensive continuum of services including traditional and expanded services such as prevention, assessment, protection, support, treatment, health, and education.
3. Agencies, partners, and stakeholders communicate, cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate effectively.
4. The public understands, supports, recognizes, and values the contributions of the Child Protection System.
5. Communities are actively involved in keeping children safe.
6. The Child Protection System has adequate, stable, and flexible funding, and is accountable for the use of its resources.
7. Staff are competent, motivated, and valued.